8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

to Bear Chief when she was no more than seven. She married him when she was about seventeen. Some girls married before the age of twelve, but many reached their middle teens before they took this serious step. Few young men married before the age of twenty-one.

It was considered a family disgrace for an unmarried girl to become pregnant. The girl alone was held responsible for her actions. It was something of a disgrace to the families of both boy and girl if they eloped. The socially approved marriage was an important family function. It was arranged by a close friend or a relative of the boy with the girl's father or elder brother. Marriage was simply solemnized by an exchange of gifts between the families of the bride and groom. The first gifts could be offered by either the bride's or the groom's folks. Horses always were the most prized gift. One or more horses were invariably given, along with robes or blankets and household goods of lesser value. Relatives commonly chipped in to make the marriage gifts as imposing as possible. It was expected that the gifts returned by the spouse's family should be more lavish than those they had received. The bride went to live with her husband in a separate lodge or that of his family.

My elderly informants were very careful to remind me that white men who claimed the Blackfeet used to purchase their wives were misinformed. They stressed the importance of the exchange of gifts in the old-time Blackfoot marriage ceremony.

After marriage it was improper for the husband to speak directly to his mother-in-law. But his ties with the male members of his wife's family generally became very strong. He commonly gave horses to his elder brother-in-law after his return from a successful horse raid. He sometimes gave him choice buffalo meat after a hunt.

Polygamy was common among the Blackfeet because it was a practical means of caring for the excess of women created by heavy war losses. Women outnumbered men by two or three to one. Possession of several wives was one of the distinguishing marks of the successful man. A few of the leading chiefs had ten

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6 Blood

but despite the unattractiveness of the wage, some of the ambitious still sought these jobs. Loyal service might be rewarded by a convenient marriage.

Although the poor man might raise his status by marrying the daughter of his rich employer, there were many times when he complained of continued exploitation after such a marriage. "Respect" did not always follow. Certain brave souls broke from the trying situation, but many knew that, if you were born poor, the ways and means of getting ahead fast were still few.

Squirrel Man, Yellow Wolf's poor son-in-law, stuck it out. His behavior bespeaks his frustrations. A year after marriage, the young groom brought his bride to her father's place. Here they were given a home of their own, "for Squirrel Man had nothing except what he got from his father-in-law for whom he worked from that time on." He sat in the Sun Lodge which his "chaste" wife put up, but it was her brother, Pointed Plume, who paid most of the expenses, made the large distributions at the give-away, and gained in prestige. Later, when Squirrel Man's sons wanted to farm, they had to borrow horses and wagons from their wealthy uncle. In time, "although he always acted like a brother to Pointed Plume," as one informant put it, the unhappy husband could tolerate his lot no longer. He feigned suicide when his wife persisted in visiting her brother; he flashed a mirror from the hill-top (a conventional invitation to assignation) in an attempt to bolster his ego and make his wife jealous—but in his case there was no eager mistress to answer it; he abandoned his wife and home, only to return meekly a short time later led by the agent; and as a final symbol of his castration, he hastily donned woman's clothes and hid when he was called by the court as a witness.[121]

Other young men preferred to work for the agency or white ranchers, for the money wages received from such employment offered a greater measure of independence. The poor young man no longer had to accept a patronizing handout from a rich relative; he no longer had to be a burden to a poor one. But despite the new opportunities, the economic advantage at marriage would still favor the sons of the rich. The poor young man might have secured some few cattle from a late issue; he might have bought a saddle horse for $100 and a fine saddle for $105; he might even have invested in a few horses, as indeed Ned Sloane did after years of working out. But all

[121] Here and in the case of the man who wanted to murder his wife because he believed she was sleeping with a ghost (see p. 51), abnormal behavior was laid to the eating of peyote. This is particularly interesting since peyote is rarely used by the Blackfoot. Squirrel Man got it from a visiting medicine man—one informant said he was a Crow, another an Osage—who put on a peyote cure for Mrs. Squirrel Man. The other secured the buttons while he was visiting the Crow.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

425 Easy access to good land is no longer possible, and the best of it has been allotted. A young and ambitious Blood must either turn again to wages, as indeed the sons of rich farmers have done, or if he is not content with the marginal land still available, he must wheedle an idle farm from a more [426] fortunate if less industrious tribesman. He may get it as a loan or on a rental [427] basis, but he is never certain how long he will be permitted to crop it. The more successful he is, the more eager the renter will be to reclaim his land [578] and try his hand at it again. Violent conflict and familial hostility frequently result.

556 CHANGING PRESTIGE FACTOR.—Distinctions between rich and poor are 184 still drawn, and frequently these obscure expected behavior. The rich daughter-in-law is served; the poor one does the work. The poor son-in-law [606] is disparaged. Even the impoverished herder or unsuccessful farmer, in [581] memory of a better day, will storm when his daughter marries a poor orphan. A poor sister-in-law said of her rich one, "She always makes me [607] work for her at her house, but she never does anything when she visits me." A poor young wife who may make a simple and justified request will be sarcastically told, "Go home, you *minipoka*." The real "favorite" may exploit his childhood privilege in the face of little criticism even after he has reached adulthood.

593 The beautiful and discontented wife of a poor man may brazenly flaunt 937 her affair with her rich lover, but the unhappy wife of a rich man will find 577 some more dignified way of showing her dissatisfaction. When her husband 556 philanders, she may refuse to cook his food; she may roll up in her own 184 blanket and deny him his conjugal rights; she may leave him, or she may entertain his mistress, ply her with fine gifts, and receive the approbation of society "because she shows no jealousy."

[575] A chief or member of the Horn Society is also roundly applauded when he shows no jealousy; but the poor husband who sits by and silently witnesses the drunken love-making of his wife and her rich lover receives no [593] respect for his restraint. A spoiled and wealthy woman may forbid her [584] "favorite" the house; she may take his horses and disinherit him if she disapproves of his marriage. A woman less economically secure, even if she is known as "manly-hearted," may uphold the authority of her "favorite" at all cost, as the one sure means of maintaining family prestige.

557 The advantages of a good marriage are quickly recognized. A wealthy Pointed Plume will say, "All women chase a rich man." A poor William Curtis will say, "A man should marry his daughter to someone who can take care of her."

178 But the changing status of various groups within Blood society is strik- 581 ingly revealed by an analysis of marriage trends. Thirty years ago marriages still followed the earlier pattern. The wealthy cattle men continued

12: Hanks & Richardson E,P-5 (1938, 1939) 1966
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For the male, we observe a break between his relatively irresponsible life as a bachelor and his responsible position as head of a household. Furthermore, to many marriage tacitly meant giving up the warpath. Thus, war activities would be limited to economically unproductive forays which beat off enemy raids on the camp. To marry implied that one had sufficient horses and in a sense jeopardized one's future, for were these animals lost through an enemy raid, the owner was less free to go again on the warpath. The responsibility for the household was too great readily to be entrusted to another.

For the female there was also a break between the rôle of a daughter in the household of her parents and the rôle of wife in the tipi of her husband. This dichotomy was framed by the mother-in-law tabu, which necessitated her living either as wife or daughter but never both. Leaving the warm, affectionate, accepting relationship of a daughter to her mother she entered the strange tipi of her husband. Frequently this change was made at an early age to accustom her more quickly to the transition, but the change was, nevertheless, a traumatic one followed by frequent attempts to escape. Father and elder brothers were rigorous in policing the marriage contract and adopted measures to enforce it comparable to the breaking of a colt.

As a result of this negative attitude toward marriage on the part of both partners definite rewards had to be offered. A key to this is furnished by the kinship system. The male received enhanced status. By the brothers of his wife he was called *nustamo'* while he replied to them with *nustamox'kua*. The suffix *xkua*, also found in the word *nuxku'a* ("my son") implies depressing a person a generation in the sense of calling a person "child." Moreover, all children of the wife's brothers were "grandchildren" so that they honored him as "grandparent." In practice the relationship of husband to wife's brother did not always follow this pattern, for the concept of seniority dominated the kinship regulations. A brother of the wife older than her husband actually held the rein of authority, but it was a warm relationship between the two males which more nearly paralleled that of siblings. Frequently the sister and her husband camped near an older brother, where the husband helped with the horses and hunting. In turn when the husband became self-sufficient, a wife's younger brother might move to help him in maintaining his household. Thus a man increased the number of his siblings through marriage and hence his personal security.

For the woman there were also prestige rewards. By entering the tipi of her husband, she, too, received nominal enhancement of status. This was achieved by depressing a generation the husband's younger siblings, who became her "sons" and "daughters." In turn their children called her "grandmother." Though she had to pay respect to her husband's elders, the wives of these older brothers, and perhaps her husband's sisters, helped her

12: Hanks & Richardson E,P-5 (1938, 1939) 1966
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667 to learn to cook, tan hides, and make moccasins. There was no hazing of the
585 new wife; rather, if very young, she was treated like a child in the attempt to make her feel at home in this new situation.

593 In addition social dicta prescribed that women be participators in the
562 cultural rewards apart from the warpath. This was mainly the case with ceremonial life. It was always necessary for a man to have a woman partner
[778] when he obtained the medicine pipe or entered the sacred societies. In these
[575] activities it was usually a wife, though a man might seek another woman to
796 take her place. These women were not ceremonially so important as a male.
593 However, one case shows where a man refused to join the Crazy Dog society,
562 and to overcome his resistance, his comrades took his wife as a member. As
[575] under this circumstance he could not refuse his wife and maintain community respect, he paid for her membership and sat beside her in all the meetings. In the Sun Dance alone a woman overshadowed her husband, but
[577] this status assured her husband of a firm marital tie. As Sun Dance vower, she personified the cultural ideal of womanhood, the woman who above all was faithful to her husband.

562 Beyond this elevation of the status of women through the necessity for
842 women partners in receiving sacred objects and in participating in general social life, there lay a mystical concept. Through women came the greatest treasures the culture offered. This meant in the family that a man might
[603] have children, for children of both sexes were avidly desired. Older people
[597] raised their grandchildren in order to have children in the tipi. It was also the practice to adopt a child should one's own child die. This pattern of cul-
562 tural rewards went even farther. In obtaining the most sacred root in the
796 Horn and mo'toki societies, the root which was the zenith of sacred objects
778 brought to the earth by the woman who brought the Sun Dance, a woman
[575] was necessary. In an esoteric ceremonial act a woman obtained for her husband the root from a man who sold it. This was a very secret and unmention-
[432] able event that separated socially the seller from the buyer until the two
[571] "made friends" at some time when neither owned the root any longer. Thus through marriage the two worlds of the male and the female were united to
581 obtain the rewards of the culture.
582

Balancing of the Lines

601 The question of lineality arises in any discussion of kinship terminology
602 in its relation to the family organization. We believe that there is only slight, if any, emphasis on the paternal line.

601 Critical in fixing lineality is the relative weight of husband versus wife's
607 brother. In the foregoing paragraphs a relative balance of the two authorities has been indicated. Ideally, it was a friendly, warm, though respectful relationship, implying a type of cooperation like that between brothers,

with seniority as the greater weight. However, regardless of seniority the wife's brother had the right to call home his sister in case of her being mistreated, and if this occurred soon after the initial marriage contract, return of the wedding gifts might be demanded. This prerogative was, of course, balanced by the more frequently exercised right of a husband to send his wife away in case of her failure to meet his demands. Normally, sex rather than family lines constituted the major cleavage, so that the two men cooperated to keep the woman faithful.

Similarly son and son-in-law were neatly balanced. The son, as we shall see presently, was the most important offspring yet little more important than the son-in-law. The rationale of the mother-in-law tabu, as stated by most women, hinges on the emotion of respect. Weight is given this phrasing in behavior, for the greater the prestige of the son-in-law, the greater the number of female in-laws who observed avoidance norms. The respect was also accompanied by periodic gifts exchanged between the son-in-law and parents-in-law. The supremacy of the son in the eyes of his parents may be seen by the following incident where a woman was dying. On her deathbed she summoned her son-in-law who entered the room with eyes lowered so as not to look in her face. After hearing the last words directed to other relatives, the son-in-law was addressed through his wife; the old woman said: "Be kind to your husband; treat him well after I am gone. I love you very much, but I love him better. I love him like a son."

Lineage was traced through the mother's line as well as through the father's. Incest was reckoned if any relationship between the two prospective spouses could be discovered. There was, however, little memory beyond three generations, when the line diffused into vagueness. With names a slight patrilineality showed itself in the desire to make a great name "live in every generation." Thus we find sons and grandsons of famous people still bearing such names as Crowfoot, Eagle Ribs, Old Sun and Many Swans. It would be unusual for a son-in-law to take a family name of this type, but if he did, it was deemed a great honor to the family, for which he would be given a good horse. More likely he would feel obliged to keep alive the important names of his own family. There were also great female names passed down in the line from mother to daughter, but their importance was overshadowed by the male names.

Inheritance of property was also multilateral. A list of recipients in order of their priority might run like this: older brother, younger brother, son, wife's brother, daughter's husband. Nominally, females might receive property and dispose of it, though in practice the husband of the woman received it and acted as agent. Horses, which made up the body of the legacy since household furnishings were parts of the mortuary tipi, were not ordinarily given to lone women, as they had no means for caring for them. The male ooo

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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434 shops and second-hand stores. One of our interpreters sold a radio
432 to a neighbour to obtain money for gifts at the Sun Dance. The Sun Dance vower's house, when visited before the Sun Dance, was
[437] adequately furnished, but afterwards it was nearly empty. Fortunately, it was not necessary to convert all of the furniture into cash; some pieces were directly converted into services at the ceremony.

434 A second and more frequent means of obtaining money is by
431 soliciting one of those kinsmen who is socially obligated to mutual
602 sharing. This expedient is of limited usefulness in acquiring cash, although almost any relative will share food and some clothing.
[593] These reciprocal obligations apply particularly to brothers, brothers-
[607] in-law, and age mates. However, if the borrower is poor and the
[561] loaner wealthy, repayment is not expected. Control over asking too frequently for assistance is the Blackfoot emphasis on the virtue of
[558] giving rather than receiving. Just as a middle-class white, failing to return his social invitations, would find himself ignored, so Blackfoot failure to reciprocate gifts means loss of prestige; and gifts, like white parties, are most frequent among equals in status.

435 As a result of all this scarcity, currency has increased in value.
436 At ceremonies a dollar in currency is considered the equivalent of a blanket worth several times that amount in a local store. As previously mentioned, only one Blackfoot farmer pays regular cash wages to his employees, the remainder making only occasional and
124 irregular payments. Part of the willingness of Indians to act as informants may be attributed to the desire for cash.

437 Two systems of transaction result from the scarcity of money. Cash is used mainly for transactions with whites and seldom passes from one Blackfoot to another. Within the reserve, however, all transferable property circulates; horses, articles of furniture, clothing, and bedding move about fairly freely on the reserve and to Indians of neighbouring reserves as well. This is a continuation and extension of the pre-reserve economy, for which there were many possible means of distribution. There is little development of production to satisfy the demands of this internal economy. Alone of Blackfoot products horses are of value here, but the horse raisers tend to prefer to change horses into cash rather than into sacred objects or other items of intra-reserve value.

438 As we shall more clearly in our study of distribution, the flow
431 of chattels through the reserve is not a lively one. The most valuable
[425] assets that a man has come from the agency via trust funds and are
[439] non-transferable. Thus it is usually the smaller and less valuable

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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government charity for over forty years, surviving as best they could. Admission was granted to these families and subsequently to a few others of the same band.

Today these Indians constitute a special group which lives somewhat apart and is identified as "Cree" by the Blackfoot. They are distinct from the Cree wives of Blackfoot and the descendants of adopted Crees whose past affiliation with Crees, though recognized, does not constitute a basis for special social status. The new-comers receive all the benefits of the Blackfoot trust fund. They have constructed their own coal-mine and continue their own ceremonials. Indeed, they use for their own purposes the Sun Dance lodge that has been erected by the Blackfoot for Blackfoot rituals. In 1939, with no Sun Dance vower from the majority group, the Crees offered to save the day by holding the ceremonies according to their tradition. Some Blackfoot participated with interest, most were grateful and somewhat satisfied at having a "sort of a Sun Dance," but many were arrogantly critical of these proceedings. The Crees, on the defensive, resolved to impress these spectators with the ceremonial rigours and the strength of their power. One night, after the chief vower had fasted for more than forty-eight hours, in the presence of a few curious spectators the aged vower was said to have made the moon dance to the beat of his drum. Respect for the Crees rose perceptibly, and though this group is treated by local reserve residents as inferior, it is now probable that as its economic position improves, differences will disappear.

Social Structure and Kinship

The band having disappeared, there remains as the present nucleus for living the individual family of husband, wife, and children. However, it is unusual for a family to remain long so small as this, for people consider themselves lonely and isolated under these circumstances. Only the recluses or very poor live alone with their wives and children. As we have noted, a young man and his wife will come to live with an older brother or one of the husband's brothers-in-law. In this household the two men help each other with the work in the fields, while their wives collaborate on baby care and household chores. Such a system is a direct continuation of the time-honoured kinship obligations between brothers, and between a man and his sister's husband or his wife's brother.

33: Bradley G-3 (1871-1877) 1923
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

584 secures the services of a friend, who goes to the father of
583 his intended, states his desire and enumerates the gifts to
585 be made to him in the event of his consent. If the father gives favorable ear to his suit, he simply sends the girl to the young warrior's lodge, who there receives her and the marriage ceremony is over. It is usual for the parents of the girl to send with her as presents to her husband such articles as their means allow, and these often exceed in value the gifts that have been received from him. Two or three horses or their equivalent in other goods constitute
[562] the customary offering in cases of intended marriage. The wishes of the girl are not consulted pending the matrimonial negotiations, but she rarely, if ever, objects.

582 Such is the custom to which she has grown up and she
607 is a passive instrument in her father's hands. It is to be
[562] remarked, however, that should she have a brother-in-law of mature years, it is even more important to conciliate him. To him revert all the proffered gifts and his opposition to the marriage would generally prevent its occurrence. Where there are several brothers-in-law it is the eldest only who enjoys this consideration.

POLYGAMY

595 Polygamy is extensively practiced among the Blackfeet and the number of wives a man may have is only limited by his ability to procure and support them. If the eldest daughter of a family is first married, it is tacitly understood that her younger sisters are bound to her husband likewise, and as fast as they arrive at the proper age they are sent to him without ceremony.

FATHERS-IN-LAW AND MOTHERS-IN-LAW

602 From the moment of marriage all direct intercourse between a husband and his wife's relatives or a wife and her husband's relatives was at an end. The husband addressed his wife's family only through her, and she observed the same rule with regard to his. Relatives by marriage sought to avoid meeting each other and would turn out of their paths for that purpose, but when an encounter was unavoidable they would hang down the head or muffle the